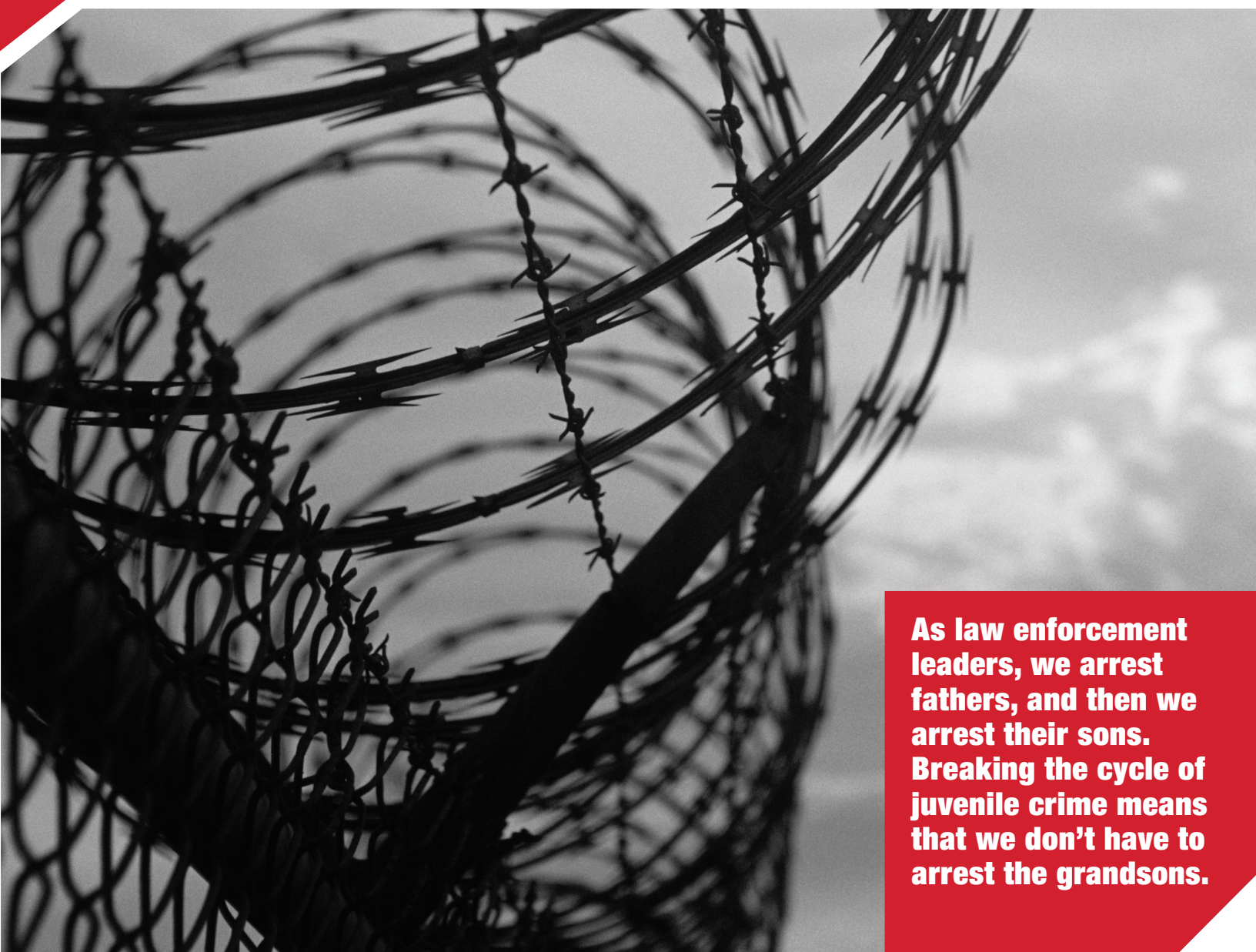


TEXAS

NEVER IS BETTER BUT ONCE IS ENOUGH

**The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act Can Help
Texas Reduce Crime and Save Taxpayer Dollars**



**As law enforcement
leaders, we arrest
fathers, and then we
arrest their sons.
Breaking the cycle of
juvenile crime means
that we don't have to
arrest the grandsons.**



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Acknowledgments

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids is a bi-partisan anti-crime organization of nearly 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, state attorneys general, other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors nationwide, including 182 members in Texas. Our members believe that the best way to prevent crime is to help parents and our communities give kids the right start in life.

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Never Is Better, but Once Is Enough

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act can help Texas reduce crime, protect public safety and save taxpayer dollars

Never is better: The 5,000 law enforcement leaders of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, including 182 members in Texas, have championed investments that keep youth from becoming involved in the criminal justice system as juveniles and adults.

But once is enough: Today we are stepping up efforts to stop those who commit a crime from continuing to do more harm—and halt the cycle of crime from one generation to the next. Texas has reduced re-offending by juveniles leaving state facilities by 12 percent while cutting the number of youths in state facilities by 71 percent. In addition, the total number of cases referred to the juvenile justice system in Texas declined by 30 percent. This is saving taxpayers' money even while improving services for other juvenile offenders that will further reduce re-offending.¹

The success Texas is starting to see is why we're supporting the reauthorization of the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP). The JJDP will encourage communities to make smart use of taxpayer dollars by engaging juvenile offenders in programs proven to help steer them away from a life of crime.

The Current Landscape: Juvenile Offenders

Placing juvenile offenders in residential facilities with other troubled youths is expensive and, in most cases, not particularly effective at reducing crime.

Our current situation is unsustainable.

- In fiscal year 2014, federal, state and county expenses for probation, detention and correction costs of juveniles totaled \$518 million in Texas.²
- The number of new commitments to the state's Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) facilities and services has



What we do now is costly:

Juvenile custody in a state residential facility in Texas averages \$160,000 a year vs. \$55,000 for tuition, room and board at Rice University.

It isn't working:

In a natural experiment, juvenile offenders in custody later dropped out of school more often and committed more adult crimes than those not in custody.

Family coaching efforts work better in most cases:

Rigorous coaching for the most serious offenders and their families cuts crime in half or more compared to placing them with other troubled youth.

And they save money:

Family coaching efforts save \$9,000 to \$27,000 per child served.



“We estimate the present value of saving a 14-year-old high risk juvenile from a life of crime to range from \$2.6 to \$5.3 million.”

—Mark Cohen, Vanderbilt University, and Alex Piquero, University of Dallas, (2009)

declined dramatically from 2,738 in 2006 to 782 in 2014. This is still an expensive option because a year of custody in a Texas state residential facility averages \$160,000 per juvenile.³

- National recidivism data for juveniles does not exist, but with 44 percent of juveniles leaving Texas state facilities in 2013 being re-arrested within one year and just less than half of juveniles leaving state facilities coming from families with a known history of criminal involvement, Texas needs to keep improving its innovative efforts to prevent future crimes.⁴

Mixing first-time and repeat offenders is usually a bad move.

Research shows it's smarter to keep first-time offenders with few risk factors away from youths who have committed more serious or frequent crimes. This prevents them from learning more problematic behaviors and becoming typecast as delinquents.⁵

Community services for juveniles who commit minor delinquencies and family coaching for the few, more serious offenders is more effective than custody in most cases.

Engaging less serious juvenile offenders in interventions such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters that focus on behavior change is far more effective at reducing re-offending

than custody. The same is true of interventions for more serious offenders that coach them and their parents on ways to change the youths' behaviors. These programs also work with teachers, athletic coaches and/or other community members to reinforce these positive influences. Randomized trials have proven that such **rigorous family-coaching programs can cut re-offending in half or more compared to the usual out-of-home placements.**⁶

For the very few serious offenders who need residential placement, it is not the endgame—we need to rehabilitate them, too.

A natural experiment showed that youth in custody later dropped out of school more often and committed more adult crimes than those not in custody.⁷ But other research shows the very few, most serious offenders do commit fewer crimes when they're sent to residential facilities (see Figure 1).⁸ Even if they are placed in facilities, these youth still need services while they are in the facilities and when they return home to reduce the risk they will re-offend and eventually end up in adult prisons.

Reauthorizing JJPDA Could Reduce Juvenile, Adult Crime

The JJPDA could encourage communities to continue backing away from simply sending offenders away from home, and provide funding for interventions with a proven impact on reducing recidivism among the types of offenders below.

Youth who need some guidance but have not committed serious offenses can benefit from community programs.

Big Brothers, Big Sisters mentoring: Research shows the program reduced the number of days youth skipped school by **half**, the number who admitted they hit someone by one-third, and the number who initiated drug use by **40 percent.**⁹

Chicago summer jobs program for inner-city high school students: A study found that participants had **43 percent fewer violent crime arrests** than youth randomly assigned to not participate.¹⁰

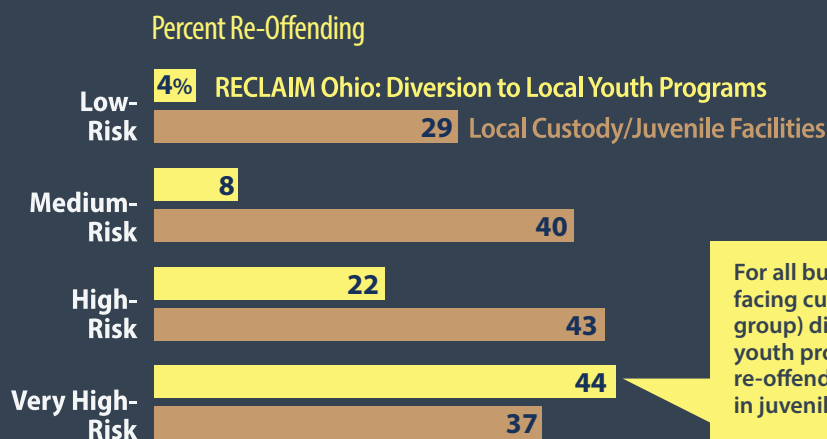
Figure 1

Landmark Study of Juvenile Re-Offending

Diversion to local, effective youth programs **reduced the rate of re-offending** more than placement in juvenile facilities for most juvenile offenders.



Edward Latessa is an expert on cutting recidivism who has consulted in 45 states and was one of the authors of this landmark study.



For all but 9 percent of the juveniles facing custody (the very high-risk group) diversion to local, effective youth programs reduced the rate of re-offending more than placement in juvenile facilities.

Note: While the data in this graph only refers to diversions from local custody, similar results were achieved by diverting youth from state custody.

Source: Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2005. Other Reclaim studies confirm these results

Juvenile offenders inclined toward aggression can benefit from evidence-based coaching.

Aggression Replacement Training (ART) is a low-cost, short-term coaching program for youth with aggressive or disruptive behaviors. ART teaches these youths interpersonal, anger management and social problem-solving skills that can be used in many different settings. A Washington state study found that, when delivered correctly, **ART cut felony convictions within 18 months by 24 percent.**¹¹

More serious juvenile offenders benefit from proven family coaching.

Too often parents don't know what to do to get their troubled adolescent back on track. Research shows that hard-nosed coaching for parents on how to reinforce positive behaviors while sanctioning bad ones is **more effective at reducing crime than sending offenders to an out-of-home facility.**

Functional Family Therapy (FFT) provides eight to 30 hours of coaching to parents and youth

together on skills that help them replace negative behaviors with positive ones. In one study, **FFT cut re-arrests in half**, and in another, participating youth were one-fourth as likely to be placed outside their home for later crimes.¹² **FFT serves approximately 250 families annually in Texas.**¹³

Multisystemic Therapy (MST) provides 60 hours of coaching for more serious youth offenders and their parents, and also focuses on reaching their teachers, coaches and/or others in their community to reinforce positive behaviors. In one randomized trial, a 22-year follow-up showed troubled youth who did not receive MST were three and a half times more likely to be arrested for a violent felony than those who did.¹⁴ In 2013, MST was provided to 114 families in Texas.¹⁵

Even if youth are placed out-of-home, ART or other Cognitive Behavioral Therapy-based approaches can be effective while youth are in facilities. And once the youths return home, family therapies can improve their chances of avoiding a life of crime.

Juvenile Justice Reform in Texas: Real Progress

Since 2006, commitments to Texas state facilities have decreased by 71 percent, while the total number of cases referred to the state’s juvenile justice system has declined by 30 percent.¹⁶ Between 2007 and 2012, Texas was able to close 8 state-run correctional facilities and reduce funding by \$150 million. Simultaneously, funding for local juvenile probation was increased by roughly 38 percent.¹⁷ Coaching programs, including FFT, that focus on troubled youth and their families and are shown to reduce youth recidivism are now becoming more commonplace among probation

departments across Texas.¹⁸ In addition to implementing more evidence-based programs, the state tracks multiple recidivism measures, including re-arrest, re-referral, re-adjudication, and re-incarceration rates and provides these rates to county probation departments. More improvements can be expected because some juvenile probation departments now have their own research divisions and are starting to use the state data to evaluate the effectiveness of the services and programs their youths are receiving.¹⁹

How JJDPA Can Save Money

Confining juveniles costs an average of \$160,000 a year in Texas—more than the \$55,000 annual cost of tuition, room and board at Rice University.²⁰ In total, Texas spent over \$500 million in 2014 on juvenile corrections.²¹ Solid research, however, shows expensive custody can usually be avoided by using family coaching or aggression prevention efforts to cut crime more effectively.²² Economists at the Washington State Institute for Public Policy—a state agency—have done extensive analysis of the data: for most juvenile offenders at risk of out-of-home placement, these programs almost always deliver better, cheaper results than sending kids away (see Figure 2).²³

Conclusion

We need to do what we can to prevent kids in Texas from becoming involved in the juvenile justice system in the first place. But for the kids who do become involved, we need to make sure we do even more to provide the right services to the right youth and ensure those programs are performing as promised.

If we can do that, there will be fewer young people in Texas continuing down the path to adult crimes and adult prison. “Never is better, but once is enough.”

Figure 2



Endnotes

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